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Gender Bending Chemicals Slipping Through Regulatory Net

A report released today by the European Commission (EC) has highlighted that international test methods are not adequate to identify all gender bending chemicals. The safety testing required by EU law leaves us vulnerable to exposure to many hormone disrupters via consumer products and food. The report by Professor Andreas Kortenkamp's team, entitled "*State of the Art Assessment of Endocrine Disrupters*" was produced under contract to the Environment Directorate of the EC.

Gender benders or hormone disrupting chemicals are suspected of playing a role in the increased rates of hormone related cancers (including breast, testicular and prostate cancer), adverse trends in male reproductive health (including birth defects of baby boys' genitals and low sperm counts) and effects on metabolism and brain function. Feminisation of male wildlife has been reported in fish, birds, reptiles and mammals living in polluted environments.

This new report complements the growing international concern about hormone disrupting chemicals, particularly amongst the scientific research community and legislators. Three new EU laws now explicitly target industrial chemicals, pesticides and biocides with hormone disrupting properties. For these laws to be effective, legislation also requires the EC to come forward with criteria to identify hormone disrupters by December 2013. The report released today will help inform this process.

Gwynne Lyons, Director of CHEM Trust noted, "This excellent report has highlighted the shortfalls in existing test methods and shines a clear light on the way forward. Member States and the EC must now get moving and act upon it in order to protect our future health and wellbeing."

Claire Robinson of Earth Open Source said, “Internationally agreed OECD test methods just do not cover all the effects of these gender-bending chemicals. For the foreseeable future, cutting-edge scientific studies by independent academics who are experts in the field must be allowed to play a greater role in identifying which chemicals need to be put under stricter control.”

Contact details:

Gwynne Lyons Tel: 01603 507363 Mobile: 07944 422898

Gwynne.lyons@chemtrust.org.uk

Claire Robinson Mobile : 0752 753 6923

claire.robinson@earthopensource.org

Notes to Editors:

1. **CHEM Trust (Chemicals, Health & Environment Monitoring Trust)**, www.chemtrust.org.uk, is a science-based charity with the aim of protecting humans and wildlife from harmful chemicals. CHEM Trust makes the links between chemicals and disease more widely understood and seeks to improve chemicals regulation and health protection

2. **Earth Open Source** (www.earthopensource.org) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to sustainability.

3. The report by Professor Andreas Kortenkamp’s team “State of the Art Assessment of Endocrine Disrupters” was commissioned by the Environment Directorate of the European Commission. It will be available on the website of the European Commission:-
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/endocrine/documents/studies_en.htm

This study was to provide a basis for i) the development of scientific criteria for the identification of endocrine disrupters; and ii) the review and possible revision of the Community Strategy on Endocrine Disrupters.

4. Three new EU laws explicitly deal with endocrine disrupters. They are: (i) The Regulation concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) (1907/2006), which relates to industrial chemicals, (ii) The Plant Protection Products Regulation (1107/2009) which relates to pesticides, and (iii) The Biocidal Product Regulation (agreed in 2011).

5. The nomination of endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) for the status of an “emerging policy issue” under the UN Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) will be discussed at the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM3) when it convenes later in 2012.

6. See the Prague Declaration on Endocrine Disrupters <http://www.bio.uni-frankfurt.de/ee/ecotox/news/PragueDeclaration.pdf>

7. Which chemicals? - Which consumer products?

Many chemicals found in consumer products and food have been reported to have endocrine disrupting properties. These include some chemicals from the following families of chemicals and **many pesticides**, residues of which may be found in food and water.

Bisphenol A (BPA) used in tin can linings and mobile phone and computer housings and recently banned from babies bottles in the EU.

Organotins which have had many applications including the now banned use in anti-foulant paint on ships, stabilisers in PVC, catalysts in chemical reactions, coatings, and in anti-odour/anti-fungal treatments for textiles.

Phthalates found in vinyl flooring, shower curtains, plastics, and soft tubing.

Alkylphenols which are used as surfactants, in paints, as a component of inks and coatings, and in the production of rubber products and polymers.

Brominated flame retardants used to prevent fire taking hold, and found in upholstery, mattresses, furniture and electrical and electronic goods. Some have been banned, but goods with them in may still be found in the home.

Dioxins which are by-products of many industrial processes and waste incineration. Widely found as contaminants of environment and food chain.

8. Under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (**OECD**), member countries develop and agree test methods to determine the safety of chemicals. To ensure the mutual acceptance of data, these are the test methods that are prescribed in legislation. However, because OECD Test Guidelines take years to develop and agree internationally, they may lag many years behind the cutting edge science.

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